

## Dandelion

While many people think of the common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) as a pesky weed, herbalists consider it a valuable herb with many culinary and medicinal uses. Dandelion is a rich source of vitamins A, B complex, C, and D, as well as minerals such as iron, potassium, and zinc. Its leaves are often used to add flavor to salads, sandwiches, and teas. The roots can be found in some coffee substitutes, and the flowers are used to make certain wines. Herbalists often use dandelion in treatment of the following conditions: Type 2 diabetes, eczema, gastrointestinal disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, liver disease, and heartburn.



Dandelion leaves produce a diuretic effect while the roots act as an antiviral agent, appetite stimulant, digestive aid, and may help promote gastrointestinal health. Dandelion flower has antioxidant properties. Dandelion may also help improve the immune system. Health care providers clinically use dandelion root to promote liver detoxification and dandelion leaves to support kidney function.

A number of studies suggest that the herb may help reduce inflammation and kill bacteria.

Here's a look at several findings on dandelion's other health effects:

1. **Antioxidants in Dandelion**

In a 2003 study, scientists found that dandelion flower extract may fight free radicals (chemical by-products known to damage DNA).

2. **Dandelion and Diabetes**

Tests on diabetic mice show that dandelion extract may help regulate blood sugar and keep cholesterol in check.

3. **Dandelion and Cancer**

Preliminary research suggests that dandelion may show promise as an anti-cancer agent. In a 2008 study on breast and prostate cancer cells, researchers found that dandelion leaf extract slowed the growth of breast cancer cells and stopped the spread of prostate cancer cells. However, neither dandelion flower extract or dandelion root extract had any effect on either type of cancer cell.

As a detoxification agent, the root of the dandelion herb is considered to be one of the most effective and beneficial herbs. It removes waste products accumulated in the liver and the gall bladder and it principally affects the functioning of the liver and the gallbladder. Dandelion also stimulates the kidneys at the same time and it enables the rapid removal of toxins through the urine produced. The root of the dandelion accelerates the steady and gradual elimination of toxins accumulating in the body due to infection or pollution. In the treatment of a variety of conditions, the dandelion possesses major and effective therapeutic benefits, these include the treatment of persistent constipation, the treatment of various types of skin problems, including acne, and diseases like psoriasis. The root also treats other types of arthritic conditions, including severe conditions such as osteoarthritis, and disorders like gout.



Native Americans used dandelion decoctions (liquid made by boiling down the herb in water) to treat kidney disease, swelling, skin problems, heartburn, and stomach upset. Chinese medicinal practitioners traditionally used dandelion to treat digestive disorders, appendicitis, and breast problems (such as inflammation or lack of milk flow). In Europe, herbalists

incorporated it into remedies for fever, boils, eye problems, diabetes, and diarrhea.

Today, dandelion roots are mainly used as an appetite stimulant, digestive aid, and for liver and gallbladder function. Dandelion leaves are used as a diuretic to stimulate the excretion of urine. Some preliminary animal studies also suggest that dandelion may help normalize blood sugar levels and improve lipid profiles (lowering total cholesterol and triglycerides while increasing HDL, "good," cholesterol) in diabetic mice.

A chemical compound called helenin found in the flowers of the dandelion may be helpful for those reduced vision in the dark - night blindness, usually treated using large doses of vitamin A. The reports carried by the journal of the American Medical Association for June 23, 1951, stated that the blossoms of the dandelion herb contain large amounts of vitamin A and vitamin B2 (riboflavin) beside the substance known as helenin.

In 1959, published German research pointed out that the dandelion root, possesses a very important and noticeable cleansing action on the tissues of the liver and eventually helps to stimulate the production of bile in the organ. The root of the dandelion also functions as a gentle laxative.

The Journal *Planta Medica*, published the results of research in 1974. The study confirmed that the leaves of the dandelion plant possess a powerful diuretic action in the human body. Dandelion leaves are not like many other conventional diuretics in their actions. All other diuretics tends to cause a loss of potassium in the body, however, the leaves of the dandelion are very rich in potassium, and those using this dandelion tend to have a net gain of the mineral following use.

## **CONSTITUENTS**

Dandelion contains:

Leaves - bitter glycosides, carotenoids, terpenoids, choline, potassium salts, iron and other minerals, vitamins A, B, C, D.

Root - bitter glycosides, tannins, triterpenes, sterols, volatile oil, choline, asparagin, inulin.

## **COMMON NAMES**

- Blow Ball
- Cankerwort
- Dandelion
- Lion's Tooth
- Pissabed
- Priest's-crown
- Puff Ball
- Pu Gong Ying
- Pu-kung-ying
- Swine Snout
- Telltime
- White Endive
- Wild Endive

## **Contraindications**

While dandelion is generally considered safe, some people experience side effects such as heartburn, diarrhea, and upset stomach. Anyone with an allergy to dandelion, ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigold, chamomile, yarrow, daisies, or iodine should avoid use of this herb.

Dandelion leaf is a diuretic and may increase the excretion of drugs from the body. If you are taking prescription medications, ask your health care provider before taking dandelion in any form. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use dandelion preparations without first talking to your health care provider:

- Lithium
- Antibiotics, quinolone
- Antacids



## References

[http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs\\_dandelion.htm](http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs_dandelion.htm)  
[http://altmedicine.about.com/od/dandelion/a/dandelion\\_root.htm](http://altmedicine.about.com/od/dandelion/a/dandelion_root.htm)  
<http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/dandelion-000236.htm>

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**Yours in Good Health!**

Sincerely,

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Dr. Jack & Verlyn Ritchason, Founders  
The Back to Herbs Team

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